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College of the Pacific
Stockton, Calif.

A STUDY OF THE TRAGIC ELEMENTS
IN
SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDIES

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of English

College of the Pacific

In partial fulfillment

of the

Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts

By

Dorothy Corson

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APPROVED Arthur Bonner

Head of Department

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CHAPTER I

In a study of the tragic elements in Shakespeare's comedies, it is necessary to distinguish between the tragic and the comic and to note their relationship, before considering the subject proper.

The terms tragedy and comedy are loose in meaning and can not be applied with rigorous exactness. Ordinarily, tragedy is associated with a dramatic composition depicting a serious story which ends disastrously for the main character, while comedy is applied to a dramatic composition treated in a light tone and ending happily for the principal character.[1] This distinction is very superficial. Both types of drama are complicated and they often overstep the boundaries in which they are supposed to be confined, making it at times very difficult to distinguish one from the other.

An interesting distinction made between them by Horace Walpole is that "Life is a comedy to the man who thinks, and a tragedy to the man who feels".

[1]The happy ending has been associated with comedy since Dante's Divine Comedy, but the connotation of the word happy has not always been the same. At one time a death in the play meant an unhappy ending, but dramatists realized later that it was possible to have the deaths of unlikable persons without marring the comic effects of the drama. On the other hand, a drama might omit a death without marring the desired tragic effect.

While they seem directly opposed to each other,[1] there really is a very definite relationship between them. Concerning this Everett comments:

> The circumstances which suggest the comic are very naturally those which are, to a greater or less extent, really tragic. The tragic is, like the comic, simply too incongruous. The great tragedy of nature, which is called the struggle for Existence, results simply from a greater or less incongruousness between any form of life and its surroundings. Thus it is that there is nothing tragic that may not to some persons or to some moods, be comic.[2]

Thorndike, also, believes it is impossible to make hard and fast distinctions between them:

> The two species cannot, indeed, be absolutely distinguished. In the theatre today there are many plays which one hesitates to classify as either tragedy or comedy. And there have always been, even in the Greek theatre, classes of plays recognized as neither the one or the other. Again, a play presenting various persons and incidents is necessarily complex in material and emotional effect and mingles suffering and ruin with happiness and success, so that whether its main effect is tragic or comic may depend on its point of view or its general tone; the divisions of tragedy and comedy are neither mutually exclusive, nor are they together inclusive of all drama.[3]

[1] "...tragedy is applied strictly to only one of the several types of serious drama, the one in which death rings down the curtain; whereas comedy is stretched to include every kind of humorous piece." Mathew, A Study of the Drama, p.118. "...tragedy has greater magnitude and scope because it can reveal the heights and the depths of human experience and all its pain and woe. Comedy, in its pure form, must necessarily restrict its choice of subject matter as well as its method of treatment, if it is to fulfill its primary aim to amuse, entertain, and arouse laughter." Smith, Types of Social Comedy, p. 1.

[2] C. C. Everett, Poetry, and Comedy, and Duty, p. 116

[3] Ashley Thorndike, Tragedy, p.4.

In life, "tears and laughter lie in close proximity;" asserts James Sully, the psychologist, "it is but a step from one to the other...the motor centers engaged, when in the full swing of action, may readily pass to the other and particularly similar action."[1]

The lack of hard and fast boundaries separating tragedy and comedy is no new idea. From the very beginning they have been closely associated. In both Greece and England, tragedy and comedy had their origin not only at approximately the same time, but out of the same form.

In Greece, both had their inception in the worship of Dionysus. All kinds of social activity found literary expression in some form of ballad dance. The "comus", which was the name given to the revel, represented the less serious side of the worship of Dionysus. The same persons who one day would participate in the restrained dance of the chorus, breathing their adoration to the gods, would another time abandon themselves to the boisterous jollity of the "comus", enjoying unrestrained freedom of speech and action. Thus the choral song chanted in the praise of the gods developed along the twin lines of the tragic and of the comic.

In England, as in Greece, the drama found its origin in religious worship. From the ritualistic ceremonies and saint-

[1]James Sully, An Essay on Laughter, p. 71.

ly legends of the medieval church, developed the Mysteries and Miracles, followed by the Moralities and the Interludes. The services of the Church furnished the impetus for the tragic themes of Abraham and Isaac and for the comic Interludes of Mak and the Shepherds. Not only did tragedy and comedy arise from the same beginning, but even in these early plays there existed a tendency to mingle comic motives and tragic themes. The unwillingness of Noah's wife to enter the ark was made more and more farcical. Herod, chagrined at the escape of the Wise Men, entertained his audience by roaring, ranting, and tearing his hair. Episodes were introduced that often had no direct connection with the main theme of the play. In The Second Shepherd" Play, a noteworthy example of this, we find the serious theme of the birth of Christ blended with the comic interpolation of the sheep stealing and Mak's trick. Thorndike substantiates these statements of the early blending.

> ...the tragic was often mingled with the comic. The dramatists mixed edification with amusement. The restraints of the sacred narrative were thrown aside for the moment, and in Herod, or Noah's Wife, or the shepherds awaiting the announcement of the birth of the Messiah, opportunities were taken for the introduction of realistic buffoonery or racy comedy often contrasted incongruously with events of momentous importance. This mixture of comic and tragic survived in the popular drama despite the opposition of the humanists. It was indeed characteristic of the medieval and Elizabethan manners and taste, and it made another important departure from the classical precedent.[1]

[1]Ashley Thorndike, Tragedy, p.6

The blending of the tragic and the comic was particularly prevalent in the Elizabethan age,[1] a time in which there was universal enthusiasm for the theatre. The Elizabethan playwright had to please a great heterogeneous audience - the nobility and the lowly, the literate and the ignorant.

Shakespeare, as were the other dramatists of his age, was influenced by the demands of the time, and allowed tragedy and comedy to mingle in the same play. In the hands of the cruder playwrights, the tragic and the comic elements so divided the honors that at the end one can scarcely say to which the final word should be given. Shakespeare, better than the others, manipulated the elements in such a way that at the end one can scarcely say to which the final word should be given. Shakespeare, better than the others, manipulated the elements in such a way that a harmonious picture of life is presented in his dramas, as D. J. Snider states:

> The Tragic and Comic fade into each other by almost insensible gradations, and the greatest beauty of poetical work often consists in the harmonious blending of the two elements. Not only in the same drama may both exist in perfect unison, but in even the same character. Great actors generally have a similar quality, and frequently it is hard to tell whether their impersonation be more

[1] "The Greek tragedy was tragic, and the Greek comedy comic, throughout; but the great Elizabethan plays were broadly inclusive of all the content of life. There are tears in many of the comedies, and there is laughter in many of the tragedies. Unity of tone, together with most of the other classical unities, is thus sacrificed to a more generous and normal presentment of life."
Richardson and Owen, Literature of the World, p.375.

> humorous or more pathetic. This happy transfusion and interchange of tragic and comic coloring is one of the characteristics of supreme Art; it brings the relief along with the pain; it furnishes the reconciliation along with the conflict. Shakespeare seems to have taken a special delight in its employment. No principle of his procedure is better known or more fully appreciated. His tragedies never fail of having their comic interludes; his comedies have, in nearly every case, a serious thread, and sometimes a background with a tragic outlook. Life is not all gloom or all delight; the clouds will obscure the sun but the sun will illumine the clouds - at least around the edge.[1]

In practically all of Shakespeare's tragedies, humor is introduced. The clownish humor of the servants and the brilliancy of Mercutio are stressed in Romeo and Juliet, the Cobblers are responsible for comedy in Julius Caesar, the Porter introduces relief in MacBeth, the Clown brings his jests into Othello, the First Grave-digger is the chief humorist in Hamlet, and the Fool in King Lear, also, produces some relief from the tragic. "The comic elements of Lear," as Dr. Alden so well states, "add to its strange Gothic greatness, like the grinning gargoyles on a solemn cathedral."[2] These examples are indicative of the place Shakespeare has given to humor in his tragedies. Not only does the introduction of comic elements furnish relief, for the moment, from the emotional intensity present in the tragedies, but, by

[1] D. J. Snider, Shakespearean Drama, a Commentary, Comedies, p.17.

[2] R. M. Alden, Shakespeare, p.271.

contrast, it emphasizes the suffering involved in the tragedy.

As he introduced humor into his tragedies, so Shakespeare introduced tragedy into his comedies. We shall now consider his comedies and note their tragic elements.

CHAPTER II

Shakespeare's dramas are often classified into four periods, and for our convenience we shall follow this arrangement. The first division of his plays includes his early endeavours. It is one of experimentation and apprenticeship. Generally speaking, its comedies have fewer tragic elements than have the comedies of the other periods. The comedies represented here are: Love's Labour's Lost, The Comedy of Errors, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and A Midsummer Night's Dream.

The plot of Love's Labour's Lost is based on the vow of Ferdinand, King of Navarre, and three young lords attending him, to study for three years, to see no women in that period, to eat no food one day a week and but one meal on every other day, and to sleep but three hours at night. Shakespeare then attacks the absurdity of this departure from common sense, and the attempt to organize society on artificial lines contrary to the fundamental laws of nature.[1]

[1]Dowden mentions this fact in his book, Shakespeare. "It concerns itself as the work of a young man naturally may, with the subject of self culture, and it gayly maintains the thesis that in our scheme of self-improvement the first requisite is this - that we take account of all the facts of human nature, including its appetites, instincts, and passions, and that any attempt to idealize these away will surely end in failure and egregious folly. Such is the underlying serious intention of the play". p.358.

Immediately after the young lords have taken the vow, they learn that the daughter of the King of France, with three maidens, has been sent as embassy to Ferdinand. This makes it necessary to dispense with one of the decrees. It naturally follows that Ferdinand falls in love with the Princess and each of the lords with the maidens accompanying her. When the young men come in conflict with their natural desires and loyalty to their vows, unhappiness results for awhile. This is reflected in the following quotations:

> By heaven, I do love; and it hath
> taught me to rhyme and to be melancholy.

> So sweet a kiss the golden sun gives not
> To those fresh morning drops upon the rose,
> As they eye-beams, when their fresh rays have
> smote
> The dew of night that on my cheeks down flows.
> Nor shines the silver moon one-half so bright
> Through the transparent bosom of the deep,
> As doth they face through tears of mine give light
> Thou shin'st in every tear that I do weep.
> No drop but as a coach doth carry thee;
> So ridest thou triumphing in my woes.

They realize the futility of their vows to isolate themselves from the world:

> Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,
> Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths.

They then proceed to make their love known to the ladies, who are amused by the sudden twist of affairs. The Princess and her companions devise many tricks, thus adding to the despair of the lords and to the merriment of the ladies. Into this scene comes a tragic note--the news of the death of the King of France.

Mercade. I am sorry, Madam; for the news I bring
Is heavy on my tongue. The King, your father--

Princess. Dead, for my life!

Mercade. Even so; my tale is told.

Biron. Worthies, away! The scene begins to cloud.

At the leave taking, the ladies are prevailed upon to take the love making seriously, but they are not yet ready to give their acceptance. The Princess orders the King to a lonely hermitage for twelve months to pay penance for the breaking of his vow. At the expiration of that time, he may come to woo her. Following the example of the Princess, each of the maidens makes a similar decree, The serious underlying intention is therefore maintained to the very end.

The humor of the comedy is furnished by brilliant and witty dialogue, and the Armado-Costard-Jaquenetta scenes. These episodes are burlesques of the serious plot, intensified and made more enjoyable because of their relationship to the serious dilemma.

This play is unique in that the denouement is not complete with the conclusion of the play, but is left unfinished until the expiration of the year. Mention of this fact is made in the last of the play:

Biron. Our wooing doth not end like an old play,
Jack hath not Jill. These ladies courtesy
Might well have made our sport a comedy.

King. Come, sir, it wants a twelfth-month and
a day,
And then t'will end.

Biron. That's too long for a play.

The tragic undertone of The Comedy of Errors results from the separation of Aegeon's family and the threatened death of Aegeon. The complications arising from the mistaken identities of the twin sons and their twin servants add to the sombre tones of the play as well as to the humor. Aegeon, a Syracusian merchant, seeking in Ephesus for his lost son is imprisoned and condemned to die because he can not pay the necessary ransom. Previously burdened with his "griefs unbearable", this added suffering causes him to picture his doom:

Hopeless and helpless doth Aegeon wend
But to procrastinate his lifeless end.

The difficulties arising from the mistaken identities of the sons and their servants add to the irony of Aegeon's situation when he is not recognized by the son who he thinks should know him.

These serious events[1] are brightened by the farcical

[1] "The grey and sorrow stricken Aegeon, bereft of wife and children, and exposed by a barbarous law to violent death; the magnanimous Duke Solinus pitying and desiring to save the victim of the law which nevertheless he is bound to execute; and the sad abbess Mother, who has abandoned the human world which had so dispiteously used her--all these are truly tragic figures, and as such, according to classical standards, are quite out of place in a farce."
H. J. Bridges, Our Fellow Shakespeare
p.66

scenes interspersed throughout the plot, and by the comic denouement in which the family is happily united. The Abbess, who is revealed as the long lost wife and mother, expresses the past sorrow and the newfound joy:

> Thirty-three years have I gone in travail
> Of you my sons; and till this present hour
> My heavy burdens ne'er delivered.
> The Duke, my husband, and my children both.
> And you the calendar of their nativity,
> Go to a gossip's feast, and go with me;
> After so long grief, such nativity!

In The Two Gentlemen of Verona the comic episodes could be cut out without maiming the play's structure and the serious love-plots, concerned with the betrayal of friendship and love. The tragic situations of the play result from the baseness of the arch-intriguer, Proteus. Broad comedy is embodied in the episodes of Speed and Launce, usually the result of a comic parody of the main action. In the scene after the parting of Proteus and Julia, Launce makes his farewells. Again, following Valentine's grief of the coming separation from Silvia, comes Speed and his discussion of love. These comic scenes are more enjoyable because of their serious impetus.

Proteus, in his intrigues, betrays his boyhood friend and his sweetheart to satisfy a sudden fancy. He seems void of all human compassion. Even his desire for Silvia is not due to a deep and noble love; she has struck merely a sudden fancy in him. The suffering of Valentine and of Silvia fails

to produce a single spark of sympathy. It is with a gloating pleasure that he recounts the suffering of Silvia in a conversation with Valentine.

> Valentine. And why not death rather than
> living torment?
> To die is to be banished from myself,
> And Silvia is myself.
>
> I have fed upon this woe already,
> And now excess of it will make me surfeit.
> Doth Silvia know that I am banished?
>
> Proteus. Ay, ay; and she hath offered to the
> doom-
> Which unreserv'd, stands in effectual force-
> A sea of melting pearl, which some call tears.
> Those at her father's churlish feet she
> tender'd;
> With them, upon her knees, her humble self,
> Wringing her hands, whose whiteness so becomes
> them
> As if but now they waxed pale for woe.
> But neither bended knees, pure hands held up,
> Sad sighs, deep groans, nor silver-shedding
> tears,
> Could penetrate her uncompassionate sire,
> But Valentine, if he be ta'en, must die.
> Besides, her intercession chaf'd him so,
> When she for the repeal was so suppliant
> That to close prison he commanded her,
> With many threats of bidding there.

Proteus becomes so involved in his intrigues that he is led to further betrayal of trust. That he lacks a conscience as well as human compassion can be well seen by this soliloquy:

> Already I have been false to Valentine
> And now I must be unjust to Thurio.
> Under the color of commending him,
> I have access my own love to prefer.

In the final scene, Proteus' treachery is fully revealed and his plans are thwarted. However, he is not

punished. Dowden believes that in the complete forgiveness of Proteus by all whom he has injured, Shakespeare holds true to one of the outstanding differentations made between tragedy and comedy. He says:

> In tragedy, character is either from the first fully formed and four-square, or if it is developed by events, it develops in accordance with an internal law. Passion runs its inevitable course, like a great wave driven by the wind, and breaks with thunder upon the shoals of death. The human actors disappear; only the general order of the world and the eternal moral law endure. But in comedy the individual must be preserved, and must at the close enter into possession of happy days; if he has erred through folly or vice, his error has not been mortal; he may in the last scene of the fifth act change his outer garb. The traitor Proteus is suddenly restored to his better mind.[1]

Thus the denouement of the play brings reward and happiness to all alike.

While serious difficulties arise in A Midsummer Night's Dream, never once do we doubt that all will end happily. Again, we find a burlesque which furnishes humor. The love of Pyramus and Thisbe is more enjoyable because it follows the difficulties of the love affairs in the main plot.

The parental objection, Helena's unrequited love for Demetrius, Demetrius' love for Hermia, Helena's disloyalty to Hermia, Puck's interference and its consequences, and the difficulties between Oberon and Titania are responsible for

[1]Dowden, "Shakespeare As a Comic Dramatist", Representative English Plays, Vol. I, p.640.

the slight tinge of sadness found in the play. All of these obstacles and ironical twists are treated with lightness and are placed in a romantic atmosphere of dreamland and fairyland. Thus the dilemmas, which are serious enough for the lovers, do not arouse great pity or sympathy from the audience, due to the treatment and atmosphere of the play. It is impossible to concentrate on woes and sorrows, while fairies are airily and gayly flitting through the scenes. As in the other comedies, all who erred are forgiven, and the lovers are happily united.

In summarizing Shakespeare's first period, we can say that in each of these early comedies there are serious underlying plots interspersed and brightened by comic episodes and witty dialogue. At no time, however, do these serious plots intrude so strongly that the comic atmosphere is endangered. The Two Gentlemen of Verona more closely approaches the tragic than do the other comedies, but even it lacks the sombreness of tone pervading in some of the later comedies. In each of these plays the clownish parodies burlesquing the serious themes are more humorous because of their connection with the main plot.

CHAPTER III

The comedies included in the second period of Shakespeare's drama are The Merchant of Venice, The Taming of the Shrew, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, and Twelfth Night. These plays exhibit the growing mastery and power of Shakespeare, who now viewed life in its entirety, thus seeing the darker as well as the lighter side. Consequently, the tragical elements are more noticeable in these plays than in those which comprise the first group of his works. While Shakespeare, in this period, dwelt little upon men's failures and sorrows, he did not ignore life's darker side. He used it, however, as a background for his picture of youth, happiness, and success.

"In structure, The Merchant of Venice", says H. J. Bridges, "is one of the most elaborate and masterly of Shakespeare's productions. A whole series of separate actions are artistically combined, in such wise that they act and react upon one another in a manner that seems perfectly normal. Tragedy and comedy mingle as naturally as light and shadow, as they do in real life, but as the classical tradition affirmed that they ought not to do in drama. We have the love-stories of Bassanio and Portia, of Gratiano and Nerissa, and of Lorenzo and Jessica. We have the trage-

dy of Antonio and Shylock, the comedy of the Caskets, and, at last, the delightfully humorous episode of the two rings, which comes to relieve the strain of the Court scene, and to reveal the sweet girlish mischief of Portia, in brilliant contrast to her stern and mannish demeanour in the conflict with Shylock".[1]

The first sentence in The Merchant of Venice, prepares us for the difficulties which are to come: "In sooth I know not why I am so sad." Antonio speaks again of his apprehensions:

> I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano,
> A stage where every man must play a part,
> And mine a sad one.

This play is one of the outstanding examples of the introduction of tragedy in comedy, and much has been written about its sombreness. The staging of the play is largely responsible for this, as Shylock's part is considered to be the greatest acting part in the drama. Conflicting emotions of pity and repulsion toward Shylock are thus produced. We sympathize with Shylock's suffering, but we cannot sympathize with his diabolical cleverness. This problem did not exist for the Elizabethan mind. The hatred of the Jews was very pronounced and the audience had no pity for Shylock. Boyer in commenting upon this, states:

[1]Bridges, Our Fellow Shakespeare, p. 76

> His hardness of heart was a matter for hatred, his misfortunes a matter for jeers. His suffering was not an occasion for sympathy, but a sign for degradation. So ran popular judgment. Even today there are some readers of The Merchant of Venice who regard Shylock as a villainous Jew unworthy of pity even when most deeply humiliated. The majority of men sympathize with Shylock. They feel that the wrongs which he has suffered account for his conduct. He is kicked into the gutter by those who are stronger than he, and then reviled for bearing the marks of his harsh treatment. How can he keep from hating his tormentors?...all of the decent people in the play hate him. In spite of the fact he is a usurer, the poet makes us sympathize with him by revealing his proud and spirited inner nature, and by displaying the oppression which has brought about the hardening of his character. By doing this he has made us sympathize with his villain; he has not made him the hero.
>
> Antonio fits into the main action of the hero well. It is the merchant whose life is put in jeopardy by a noble action. It is he for whom we are concerned. It is he who is about to suffer unmerited woe and misfortune and his danger stimulates both pity and fear. Our pity for Shylock begins long before the fourth act, but the pity we feel during the trial scene is aroused by Antonio.[1]

The climax of the drama is reached at the time Antonio comments,

> "creditors grow cruel,
> My estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit."

Previously comic or romantic, the play now temporarily becomes tragic. Coupled with the concern for Antonio's safety, is a sympathy for Shylock. The elopement of Jessica added to his past grievances, causes the Jew to demand the

[1]Boyer, The Villain As Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy. P. 227-229

forfeit of his bond and to utter the sympathy-inciting speech in which his soul is bared:

> I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in that rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

With this desire for revenge in his heart and with the smarting remembrances of his spurnings and mistreatments in his mind, Shylock enters the court for the trial. A final appeal to him is made in vain. In the great emotional trial scene, Shylock's diabolical nature and gloating over his expected revenge show his villainy as well as his suffering. When the tables turn and we are assured of Antonio's safety, the tragic part of the play ends, but we still feel a sympathy for Shylock, as he leaves the court, saying,

> I pray you, give me leave to go from hence;
> I am not well. Send the deed after me,
> And I will sign it.

With the closing of the play we feel neither the serious mood that accompanies tragedy nor the lively satisfaction that usually accompanies comedy. With our relief over Antonio's

safety and our enjoyment of the delightful music and moonlight in the fifth act, is mingled our pity for the lonely Jew. Shakespeare has well proved the fact that happiness for one may mean tragedy for another.

Shakespeare's next two plays are exceptions to the general type in this period. He forsakes the grim type of comedy in favor of the rollicking farces, The Taming of the Shrew and The Merry Wives of Windsor. These dramas are episodic comedies with serious sub-plots.

The main plot of the first deals with the unmanageable Katherine and the riotious actions of Petruchio. Combined with this, we have the serious sub-plot of Bianca and Lucentio. Petruchio so eclipses the wildness of Katherine by his own stubbornness and waywardness that Katherine obeys him, first, through bewilderment and finally through submission. The "taming", however, entailed sacrifice and a small amount of suffering on Katherine's part, as she is

".....starv'd for meat, giddy for lack of sleep
With oaths kept waking, and with brawling fed;"

The mistaking of Vicentio for a mad man produces a momentary graveness, but the error is soon discovered. Thus we find little resemblance to tragedy in this farce.

Falstaff, Shakespeare's master comic character, appears in the second farcical play, The Merry Wives of Windsor. Falstaff in this play is not the same character, who delights us in the Histories. Shakespeare's development of Falstaff's

character in the Histories, shows again his ever existing practice of fusing the tragic and the comic. Falstaff, the great comic character, dies of a broken heart. At the height of his anticipation of future glories and power, his dreams are cruelly ended as Prince Hal, now King Henry VI, spurns him.

> "I know thee not, old man, fall to thy prayers.
> How ill white hairs become a fool and a jester."

Even the great abounding humor of Falstaff can not stand such a rebuke. He never rallies from the rejection of his former companion, and he soon dies. However, Falstaff in love could not be pictured in any other way than he is portrayed in this play. In it we see him the object of various tricks perpertrated by the merry wives, but largely brought upon himself by his own blundering. The sub-plot with its serious intonation deals with the triple wooing of Ann Page. Ann is beset with opposition and difficulties but finally outwits her parents and succeeds in marrying the man of her choice. The affairs of Falstaff are both disgusting and pitiful. The brooding jealousy of Ford, however, is a little more serious in nature, but as can be seen, neither this play nor The Taming of the Shrew have any elements of real tragedy.

The next three plays have more noticeable tragic influences. In Much Ado About Nothing, a villainous intrigue takes us to the border of tragedy.[1] The tragic atmosphere

[1] "The romance plot, with Hero, Claudio, and Don John as
cont. p.22

is lightened by the serious portion being conducted in a romantic manner; by Don John's, the villain, being little more than a puppet, announcing: "I am a plain dealing villain"; by the blundering Dogberry; and finally by the brilliant and sparkling Beatrice and Benedick.

The main plot deals with the desire of Don John, the jealous bastard brother of the Prince, to injure him, as he explains "If I can cross him in anyway, I bless myself everyway." Because the Prince becomes interested in arranging the match between Hero and Claudio, Don John decides to prevent it, not from any dislike of them, but because by so doing he may vex the Prince. The plot of Don John is successful and Hero is publicly denounced on her wedding day, and falsely accused of infidelity. She swoons, and the word is given out that she is dead. Later Don John's villainous trick is revealed, thus proving Hero's innocence. Claudio is commanded to marry a supposed cousin of Hero, but when the masks are removed none other than Hero is revealed. All ends happily. Even Don John's punishment is put off until the morrow.

As You Like It, included in this period, gives us the

[1] its chief persons, might easily form a tragi-comedy; that is, it brings about so serious a situation that it threatens to arouse the tragic emotions, and the wickedness and pathos of Hero's wrongs approach the point of spoiling the light-hearted pleasure proper to comic art."
R. M. Alden, Shakespeare, p. 219.

story of two usurping older brothers. At the beginning of the play we learn of the unjust banishment of the Duke by Frederick, of Oliver's treacherous plans to get rid of Orlando, and of Rosalind's and Celia's escape to the Forest of Arden. The villainy in the play is held in the background and is temporarily forgotten in the charming romantic setting. The foul plans of Oliver are not successful and after love has overcome the difficulties in its path, the usurping brothers pay their penance and are forgiven. The denouement concludes with the uniting of the lovers and the forgiveness of the brothers.

When Orlando first comes to Arden he is suffering from fatigue and hunger. He encounters the banished Duke who invites him to join his group. The Duke comments on their state:

> Thou seest we are not all alone unhappy
> This wide and universal theatre
> Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
> Wherein we play in.

Even these pangs of remorse are forgotten in the later happy existence in the Arden. The comic spirit pervades the whole play.

Jacques,[1] one of the most notable persons in the play,

[1] "Jacques is a noncombatant in the battle of life. He has tasted pleasure in his youth, he has spent his patrimony in foreign travel, and has now retired on his experience. His sole occupation is to watch the combat he has quitted. Seen from the outside, life is to him a mere dramatic spectacle. Perhaps his point of view is not the best, for he finds more to

introduces a spirit of melancholy and cynicism. He takes great delight in nourishing this state of mind and is continually talking about it, yet he does not cast much of a shadow on the brightness of the scene. He says of himself, "I can suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs."

Later in the play Rosalind remarks to him, "They say you are a melancholy fellow".

Jaques responds, "I am so; I do love it better than laughing."

Such an attitude can not be taken very seriously.

At the conclusion, Jaques is the only dissatisfied one and refuses to join in the celebration.

Duke. Stay, Jaques, stay.

Jaques. To see no pastime I. What you would have
I'll stay to know at your abandon'd cave.

Duke. Proceed, Proceed. We will begin these rites,
as we do trust they'll end, in true delights.

An atmosphere of romantic pathos surrounds Twelfth Night or What You Will, in Orsino's unrequited love, and in the complications which the shipwrecked maiden, Viola, attired as a page, produce. This pathos is brightened by the admirable comedy of Sir Toby, Andrew Aguecheek and

cry than to laugh over. He sees life in its mean, ludicrous, and pathetic aspects....."
Arden Edition, Five Comedies of Shakespeare, "As You Like It", p. 19.

mischievous Maria, and by the badgering of Malvolio- "sad and civil" but "sick of self-love".

Twelfth Night presents a great confusion of attachments and mistaken identities. We find Viola grieving at the supposed death of her brother, Sebastian grieving because he thinks she is drowned, Orsino in love with Olivia, Viola in love with Orsino, Olivia in love with the young page, Malvolio positive that Olivia is in love with him, Sir Andrew with a broken head, and Sir Toby with a "bloody coxcomb". These circumstances are but passing shadows, however, and by contrast intensify the humor of the play. Shakespeare prolongs the suspense to the greatest degree - the Duke is wrathful and threatens to kill Viola for her apparent hypocrisy, Olivia is almost heartbroken at the seeming desertion of her husband, Viola is scorned by the man to whom she has just confessed her love. At the height of this suspense, the mistaken identities are revealed. Suddenly, Malvolio, who has been bound and placed in a dark room, is remembered. He states his wrongs in his letter:

> By the Lord, Madam, you wrong me and the world shall know of it. Though you have put me into darkness and given your drunken cousin rule over me, yet have I the benefit of my senses as well as your ladyship. I have your own letter that induced me to the semblance I put on; with the which I doubt not but to do myself much right, or you much shame. Think of me as you please. I leave my duty a little unthought of and speak out of my injury".

Malvolio because of his high regard for himself is an easy victim for Maria and Sir Toby. He so sincerely believes

their insinuations and letters, that he really suffers because of their tricks. Dr. Alden believes, "....Malvolio's story, like Hero's and like Shylock's, seems to some persons to become too serious a matter for comedy. His ill treatment, farcical in itself, is raised by the vitality and the dignity of his character to something like the painfulness of tragic art."[1] Consequently, if the comic tone of the play is to be preserved, Malvolio cannot be interpreted as a character of too much importance.

Some atonement is to be made to him for his injuries. Olivia remarks, "He hath been most notoriously abus'd", and the Duke orders, "Pursue him, and entreat him to a peace".

Regardless of the entanglements of the various love affairs and the ruthless tricks played on Malvolio, Twelfth Night is undeniably a comedy satisfying and pleasing in nature.

In the plays of this period we find evidence of Shakespeare's growing mastery of technique. Generally speaking, these plays are concerned with youth overcoming the obstacles placed in the path of love. They, especially Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, and Twelfth Night adhere to one of the qualifications of a good Elizabethan drama mentioned by Dr. Alden,

There was, of course, likely to be a complication

[1] R. M. Alden, Shakespeare, p.228.

> threatening grave difficulties to the principal character, but avoided in the denouement by the happy coalition of Fortune, virtue and dramatic skill. Such a complication might even be due to positive villainy, almost as black and ominous as that depicted in the tragedies, but with the difference that the evil would be found in persons of minor importance, and that its defeat would be readily seen.[1]

Life's darker side is introduced, but the comic spirit pervades and in the denouements the difficulties are overcome and all ends happily.

[1] R. M. Alden, Shakespeare, p.51.

CHAPTER IV

The third division of Shakespeare's plays includes his great tragedies (Othello, Macbeth, King Lear, and Hamlet) and but three comedies - Troilus and Cressida, All's Well That Ends Well, and Measure for Measure. It is interesting to note that even in the comedies of this period, the prevailing tone is almost tragic.

Of All's Well That Ends Well, Nicoll says, "....it is naseous and disgusting. Helena is one of the most characterless of Shakespeare's heroines and Bertram is equally without character."[1] Neilson and Thorndike share a similar opinion. This, "alone of Shakespeare's comedies, has a hero who is a rake; and, skilful as is the delineation of Helena, it needs all the dramatist's power to hold our sympathy and to force us to an unwilling assent to the title."[2]

The first scene of the play acquaints us with the grieving of a Mother over the death of her husband and the departure of her son for the Court, the King's seemingly fatal illness, and Helena's unrequited love. At the very outset we are presented with a gloomy picture, which is brightened by Helena's curing of the King. The scene darkens again with

[1]Nicoll, Allyrdice, British Drama, p.130.

[2]Neilson and Thorndike, Facts About Shakespeare, p. 83.

Bertram's objection to his marriage with Helena, and his desertion of her immediately after the ceremony. The remainder of the play to the denouement is morbid, dealing with Bertram's dissipation and Helena's success in turning an intended sin into a deed of restitution. Thus she fulfills the seemingly impossible conditions Bertram's own bitterness had devised, and is able to comment:

> All's well that ends well yet,
> Though time seems so adverse and means unfit.

The sensuousness of Bertram, and Helena's difficulties in forcing him to recognize her as his wife make us doubt the truth of the above quotation. We are left with the feeling that it is the "most lamentable comedy".

Measure for Measure has scenes and motives which are very definitely tragic. There are three tragic motives: Conflict between law and individual ethics, trial of woman's chastity, and the unmasking of hypocrisy. Behind all of this is the comic motive of the Duke in disguise, producing "tragedy and comedy together, inextricably interfused, co-existent in a mutual contradiction".[1]

The setting of the play is in a city of corruption and lewdness. Isabella, the chaste heroine, ennobles the story somewhat. Her character remains pure and unsullied in spite of the circumstances, but "her very courage and purity and

[1] Arthur Symons, Studies in Elizabethan Drama, p.44.

intellectual light do but serve to deepen the darkness", believes Symons, "when we conceive of her as but one sacrifice the more. Just as Cordelia intensifies the pity and terror of King Lear, so would Isabella's helpless virtue add the keenest ingredient to the cup of bitterness but for the Duke."[1] Claudio is the victim of tyrannical law, while he succombs to his own weak inner nature. At the beginning of the play he pretends to be a virtuous man, provoking this tribute:

> If any in Vienna be worth
> To undergo such ample grace and honour,
> It is Lord Angelo.

When his real self is revealed, Angelo pleads for death,

> I am sorry that such sorrow I procure;
> And so deep sticks it in my penitent heart
> That I crave death more willingly than mercy.
> 'tis my deserving, and I do entreat it.

To make the comic denouement complete, proper justice is meted out after the intervention of the Duke. Both offenders are pardoned and the real criminal is married to a lovable woman. Even the forgiveness at the end does not dispel the sordid and serious tone of the play. "Indeed, though Measure for Measure is counted, technically, among the comedies", believes Dr. Stalker, "it is, in its total scope, one of the most solemn and tragic of all the poet's productions."[2]

[1] Arthur Symons, Studies in Elizabethan Drama, p.45.

[2] James Stalker, How to Read Shakespeare, p. 134.

John Palmer makes a like criticism of the drama:

> Measure for Measure breaks gradually down as a comedy. Emotion surges upon the barriers erected to keep it out. They break utterly down at last. Shakespeare becomes ever more at one with the people he has created; and, at last, in a play wherein he intended to stand aloof and critically to laugh, there intrudes that most bitter cry of all flesh - a speech at the height of tragedy:
>
> "Ay, but do die, and go we know not where,
> To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
> This sensible warm motion to become
> A kneaded clod...."
>
> Shakespeare's comedy now lies in ruins, destroyed by the intrusion of an emotion too deep to live with the Laughter of M. Bergson.[1]

The last of the comedies in this third division of Shakespeare's plays, Troilus and Cressida, starts as a carefree play and then becomes a degraded sort of a tragedy. The story of Troilus and Cressida disappears altogether from the plot and plays no part in the concluding action.[2] This drama is the result of Shakespeare's attempt to write a purely intellectual comedy. "It is made out of history with an infinite deal of tragedy in the matter of it", says Symons, "and its upshot is purely comic."[3]

The story is concerned with the Trojan - Greek war, which is responsible for some of the seriousness of tone.

[1]John Palmer, Comedy, p.20.

[2]"The end of Hector's story was certainly tragic, and that of Troilus and Cressida was bound to be so too - if it had been brought to an end at all. But in the play as a whole the comedy element is actually far more prominent. Both the supposedly serious plots are interpreted with an almost brutal flippancy which makes impossible any definite attachment of the sympathies, and emotional hodge-podge."
R. M. Alden, Shakespeare, p.295.

[3]Arthur Symons, Studies in Elizabethan Drama, p.157.

The two outstanding causes for gloom are the infidelity of Cressida and the death of Hector. Troilus is sincere in his love and when he finds Cressida untrue to him he receives a great blow. After Troilus' lament, nothing more is heard of Cressida.

> O Cressid! O false Cressid! false, false!
> Let all untruths stand by thy stained name,
> And they'll seem glorious.

Shortly after this, Hector, surprised without his armour, is slain by Archilles. So ends the play, which bears little resemblance to the other comedies. The ending is certainly not comic, but enough humor exists in the remainder of the play to cause it to be classified, as a comedy. The remembrance of the tragic figure of Troilus, the man who loved too much, and the death of Hector almost overshadow the elements of comedy in the play. The light treatment of the characters lessens the gloom and prevents our suffering to any great extent with the characters in their disappointments.

After considering these three sombre comedies it is easily seen that Shakespeare carried the spirit of tragedy into the other plays of this period. Each is sordid, sensuous, and bears resemblances to the tragedies. None of them are outstanding plays, exhibiting Shakespeare's mastery and power.

CHAPTER V

It is with relief that we turn to the fourth group of Shakespeare's plays. In this last period, the bitterness and despair apparent in the previous period is replaced by a serenity and prevailing reconcilation. All four of the dramas: Pericles, Prince of Tyre, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest deal with the separation and reuniting of families; all show us sympathetic characters deeply wronged, and finally overcoming their injurers by forgiveness. The abounding high spirits of the earlier comedies are here replaced by a mood of calm assurance of the ultimate triumph of good and of placid faith that survives a rude acquaintance with the evil that is in man's heart."[1]

The outstanding resemblances to the tragic are found in the intrigues of Antiochus to kill Pericles, the misery of Tarsus, the shipwreck of Pericles, the apparent death of Thais, the treachery of Cleon and Dionyza, the capture of Marina by the pirates, and her experiences in the brothel. Pericles summarizes the misfortunes of his life in these words:

> I here confess myself the King of Tyre,
> Who, frighted from my country, did wed
> At Pentapolis the fair Thais
> At sea in childbed did she die, but brought forth

[1] Neilson and Thorndike, Facts About Shakespeare, p. 84.

> A maid-child call'd Marina, who, O goddess
> Wears yet that silver livery. She at Tarsus
> Was nursed with Cleon; who at fourteen years
> He sought to murder, but her better stars
> Brought her to Mytilene, 'gainst whose shore
> Riding, her fortunes brought the aboard us
> Where, by her own clear remembrance, she
> Made known herself my daughter.

Equally lamentable are the experiences of Marina, the daughter of Pericles. Motherless, she is raised by Cleon who treacherously plans her death. Escaping from Cleon's foul scheme she is captured by pirates, who place her in a brothel. There she remains until she is taken to Pericles. Throughout all she remains pure and noble, worthy of a king's daughter.

After Pericles and Marina are happily united, it is soon discovered that Thais is still alive and a happy reunion ensues. The joyousness which prevails at the conclusion causes Pericles to say, "Your present kindness makes my past miseries sport."

Cymbeline must have followed not long after Pericles. The folio editors called it The Tragedy of Cymbeline, but perhaps for no better reason than it purported to deal with fortunes of a king. Modern editors place it among the comedies because of its happy ending. The villainy and jealousy in Cymbeline bears resemblances to those in some of the great tragedies. Imogen, like Desdemona and Cordelia, remains unsullied and innocent through the treachery and intrigues. The Queen, in her scheming and villainy, has been compared

to Lady Macbeth, while Iachmo bears resemblances to Iago, and Posthumus to Othello. Imogen is the greatest sufferer in the play. Her condition at the beginning of the play is described in this manner by some of the Gentlemen of the Court:

> His daughter, and the heir of's kingdom, whom
> He purposed to his wife's sole son - a widow
> That late he married - hath referr'd herself
> Unto a poor but worthy gentleman. She's wedded,
> Her husband banish'd, she imprison'd; all
> Is outward sorrow; though I think the King
> Be touched at very heart.

These circumstances become more and more complicated and she is finally deserted by all. She bewails her fate:

> A father cruel, and a step-dame false
> A foolish suitor to a wedded lady
> That hath her husband banish'd
> O, that husband!
> My supreme crown of grief.

A similar sentiment is expressed by a Lord of the Court,

> Alas, poor princess,
> Thou divine Imogen, what thou endur'st
> Betwixt a father by thy step-dame govern'd
> A mother hourly coining plots, a wooer
> More hateful than the foul expulsion is
> Of thy dear husband.

She feels that she has nothing to live for, and when Pisanio reveals to her his instructions to kill her, she urges him:

> Take it, and hit
> The innocent mansion of my love, my heart
> Fear not; 't is empty of all things but grief.

The scene is brightened in the final reconciliation, in which the Queen, dying, confesses her villainous intrigues and

hypocrisy, Cloten is killed, the innocence of Imogen is established, Cymbeline's lost sons are restored to him, peace between Britain and Rome is declared, Iachmo is forgiven, and Imogen and Posthumus are united and reinstated in their rightful place. That all shall be happy, Cymbeline orders,

> All o'erjoyed,
> Save these in bonds. Let them be joyful too,
> For they shall taste our comfort.

The first three acts of The Winter's Tale are tragic. At the close of them, Leontes and Polixenes are estranged, Mamilius is dead, Antigonus is slain, and Hermoines is apparently dead of a broken heart. The jealousy of Leontes, which is responsible for the tragedy, is baseless and has far less excuse than had that of Posthumus or Othello. Hermoines is a noble and gentle character far removed from the sudden and shameless dishonor of which she is suspected. As the result of this unjust accusation, the Queen and Leontes spend a lifetime of solitude and pain, while the infant Perdita is estranged from her kindred and friends. Here we find little comedy. It is almost entirely tragic adhering to the thought given in explanation of the title, "a sad tale's best for winter."

With the beginning of the fourth act, the play is brightened by the scenes of shepherd life and the episodes connected with Autolycus. The joy of Perdita and Florizel in the happy pastoral setting is soon clouded, however, by Polixenes' interference. After the young lovers have surmounted

the obstacles in their path, and Leontes has been purified by his anguish and remorse, the happy reconciliation of families and friends takes place. Even in this new wonder and joy, a note of sadness enters because of the losses of the past. This thought is expressed by Leontes a little before the discovery of Hermoine.

> Whils't I remember
> Her and her virtues, I cannot forget
> My blemish in them, and so still think of
> The wrong I did myself, which was so much
> That heirless it hath made my kingdom, and
> Destroyed the sweet'st companion that e'er man
> Bred his hopes out of.

The last, and considered by many the best of all of Shakespeare's comedies, is The Tempest. In its beginning, this drama resembles a revenge play, but this spirit of vengeance is not carried out. "The wrong doers of The Tempest," according to Dowden, "are a group of persons of various degrees of criminality from Prospero's perfidious brother, still active in plotting evil, to Alonzo, whose obligations to the Duke of Milan had been of a public or princely kind. Spiritual powers are in alliance with Prospero and these, by terror and awakening remorse, prepare Alonzo for receiving the balm of Prospero's forgiveness. He looks upon his son as lost, and recognizes in his son's loss the punishment of his own guilt. 'The powers delaying not forgetting', have incensed the sea and shore against the sinful men; nothing can deliver them except heart-sorrow and a clear life ensuing."[1] Prosper had been banished from his

[1] Dowden, Shakespeare, His Mind and His Art, p.410.

dukedom, and with his baby daughter was exposed in a rotten boat to the mercy of the waves. Now that his enemies are completely in his power, Prospero must decide on his course of action. To carry out the spirit of revenge would be contrary to the code of ethics to which Shakespeare adheres in all of his last plays.

Besides the injustice done to Prospero, we have the shipwreck, the monstrosity of Caliban, the conspiracy of Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban which add tragic notes to the comedy.

Caliban, half-man and half-beast, has been called by many "the missing link". His beastly qualities excite wonder, disgust, and pity. His human qualities exhibited in his suffering and the recognition of his own weakness and deficiency causes him to curse Prospero,

> You taught me language; and my profit on 't
> Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language.

Pathos is present in his ignorance, his fawning to Stephano and Trinculo, and in his later submission to Prospero, whom he holds in dread and fear. In contrast to Caliban's monstrosity is Ariel's daintiness.

These contrasts--the comic and the tragic, the spirit of revenge and the spirit of forgiveness, the grotesque and the beautiful, and mighty power and simple love--cause Moulton to say of this play:

> Perhaps the fullest harmony of tones is to be found in

> The Tempest. We rise to the most exalted point of the serious when Prospero, temporarily omnipotent, wields dispensation of providence over the three men of sin; with this we blend the simple love interest of Ferdinand and Miranda; there is the sustained wit of Gonzalo and the courtiers who tease him; lowest of all we have the farcical business of the intoxicated sailors led in dread conspiracy by the fish-monster Caliban.[1]

We have found in each of these last plays the reigning spirit of reconciliation, the victory of the wronged, and the forgiveness of the wicked. In all, there are outstanding tragic elements. Schelling states that, "In them, while we rise to no such heights of passion as animated the great tragedies, we have, none the less, serious emotions, deep and penetrating insight into human nature, and the presentation of personages on the stage in which only the most captious criticism can find any falling off in art."[2] Dowden is equally enthusiastic over these last plays: "There is a certain romantic element in each. They receive contributions from every portion of Shakespeare's genius, but all are mellowed, refined, made exquisite; they avoid the extreme of the broad humour and tragic intensity; they were written with less of passionate concentration than the plays which immediately precede them, but with more of a spirit of deep or exquisite recreation."[3]

[1]Richard Moulton, Shakespeare As a Dramatic Thinker, p.179.

[2]Felix Schelling, Elizabethan Playwrights, p.223

[3]Dowden, Shakespeare, His Mind and His Art, p.403.

CHAPTER VI

In the foregoing study of Shakespeare's comedies we have found in each the presence of tragic elements. Some of the plays have only a slight tinge of sadness, while others are "very tragical mirth" indeed. It has been interesting to note, too, that each of the comedies in a period have similar tragic elements.

The plays of the first period, generally speaking, have serious underlying plots, but lack any extreme tragic tone. The humor in the plays is the result of brilliant dialogue and burlesquing episodes. In Loves Labour's Lost the serious theme is kept well in the background; in The Comedy of Errors, the suffering of Aegeon gives a somewhat solemn tone to the whole play; in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, the treachery of Proteus is almost gloomy in its outcome but the characters are saved from disaster by his sudden repentance; and in A Midsummer Night's Dream a grave intonation is brightened by the atmosphere of the play as well as by its comic episodes. The burlesques introduced in each of these plays are cleverly related to the main plot.

More definite tragic notes are introduced in the comedies of the second period. Even in these, however, the sombreness is usually kept in the background, while the portrayal of youth, happiness, and success receives the greatest

emphasis. In but two plays of this division, The Merchant of Venice and Much Ado About Nothing, is the tragic allowed to come to the foreground. The Taming of the Shrew and The Merry Wives of Windsor are farcical in nature and are almost lacking in graveness. As You Like It and Twelfth Night are more solemn in tone, but the picture of youth and happiness in each of them is given the greatest emphasis.

In the third division of Shakespeare's work are grouped his great tragedies, and only three comedies. The prevailing tone of the comedies - Troilus and Cressida, All's Well That Ends Well, and Measure for Measure - is almost more tragic than comic. There are more elements of sordidness and sensuousness, too, than in the plays of any other period.

There is to be noted in the consecutive periods an increasing stress upon tragedy, but its height is reached in the third period. From this time on, however, cynical bitterness is replaced by a mellowed kindly reconciliation.

In the dramas of the last group—Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest — there is neither broad farcical humor nor the bitter tragedy of the earlier plays. The triumph of good and the reunion of separated families are introduced in these last comedies. The tragic note is the result of the innocent suffering, unjust wrong, and accusations.

This mingling of tragedy and comedy exemplifies Shakespeare's power. By contrasts in his plays he has intensi-

fied the emotion he desired to produce, he has avoided monotony, and he has been able to give us a true picture of life. Shakespeare is the master of all situations and of all characters. His plays are not confining; they reach out to embrace all of life.

Some writers feel bound by the unities. Shakespeare is bound by nature and not by hard definitions. In life, tears and laughter are mingled; therefore, in drama which pictures life, the two must be fused. Fleming praises this practice of Shakespeare:

> In nothing does Shakespeare reveal his genius more than in the fusion of the tragic and comic in the same play. In dramatic literature there are great tragedies in which there are comedies of a high order from which is entirely excluded the serious, the sad, the tragic. Shakespeare perceived that this distinction was neither real nor artistic. The smile on the lip is as natural as the tear in the eye. The laugh, like the sob, is a normal expression of human antithesis of the serious. Shakespeare is true to this phase of human nature. On the boards of his theatre fools elbow philosophers, clowns stand side by side with kings and heroes. In his writings,.....the humorous and the serious, the comic and tragic, are mingled; more, they are fused.[1]

A similar opinion is held by Crawshaw:

> His stage is the world, his characters are types of universal mankind, his subject is the human soul. In his portrayal, he seems to mingle and fuse apparently contradictory elements. His imagination unites the realistic with the romantic, combines the humorous and grotesque with what is mostly deeply tragic. The development of his art - and doubtless of his character - was toward self-confidence, self-mastery, serenity, a generous but profound morality. If any man was ever in harmony with nature, it was he. Consciously or unconsciously he understood the world in which he lived, sympathized with it and had the power to portray

[1] Fleming, Shakespeare's Plots, p.137.

it.[1]

Because of this sympathetic treatment of various themes, Shakespeare has universal appeal. "Free of every theory, accepting all of life, rejecting nothing, uniting the real and the poetic, appealing to the most various men, to a rude workman as to a wit. Shakespeare's drama is a great river of life and beauty. All who thirst for art or truth, the comic or the tender, ecstasy or satire, light or shade, can stoop to drink from its waters, and at almost every instant of their changing moods find the one drop to slake their thirst."[2]

[1]Crawshaw, The History of English Literature, p. 134.

[2]Legouis and Cazamian, History of English Literature, p.454.

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